

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A newel guide for supporting a handrail, comprising:
a friction belt having forwarding a closed curved shape loop and including an outer surface supported to be in contact with an internal surface of the an associated handrail such that the friction belt moves in response to movement of the handrail; and
a support ~~means~~ structure for supporting an inner surface of the friction belt to allow the friction belt to make a continuous movement around the support ~~means~~ structure.
2. (Original) The newel guide of claim 1, wherein said friction belt comprises an inner layer and an outer layer having a friction coefficient higher than that of the inner layer.
3. (Currently Amended) ~~The newel guide of claim 1, wherein said support means comprises:~~ A newel guide for supporting a handrail, comprising:
a friction belt forming a closed loop and including an outer surface positioned to be in contact with an internal surface of an associated handrail; and
a support structure that supports an inner surface of the friction belt to allow the friction belt to make a continuous movement around the support structure, the support structure comprising:
a newel frame having a pair of plate members at an upper portion thereof, the plate members being separated from each other and extending in a longitudinal direction of the newel frame;
an intermediate guide mounted on the pair of plate members and having a depressed surface in contact with the inner surface of the friction belt; and
a pair of joint guides mounted to the newel frame adjacent to ends of the intermediate guide, an end of the joint guide providing a support surface for supporting the continuous movement of the friction belt.

4. (Original) The newel guide of claim 3, wherein a passage through which the friction belt travels is formed under the pair of plate members.
5. (Original) The newel guide of claim 4, wherein the pair of plate members has a slit formed therebetween through which the friction belt is introduced into the passage in an assembling process of the newel guide.
6. (Original) The newel guide of claim 3, wherein the newel frame has a pair of wings extending laterally outwardly from the newel frame and the handrail has a pair of hooks fittable over the pair of wings.
7. (Original) The newel guide of claim 3, wherein the end of the joint guide has a curved shape in its cross-section.
8. (Original) The newel guide of claim 3, wherein the joint guide is fixed to the newel frame by using a thread.